WILDLIFEDIRECT

Newsletter
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WILDLIFE WARRIORS KIDS

Hello Wildlife Warriors!
Stay connected to nature even when you are at home.

Welcome to Issue 26! Have you ever seen **Guineafowls?** Do you know how many species we have in Kenya? Read on as we learn more about these beautiful species of birds.

We also meet one of the Nature's Treasures Photo Competition junior entrants and explore actions we can take for nature. We have wild jokes, and much, much more… **Please read on!**

Stay with us on this fun filled adventure and always remember to share with your family and friends.

JUNIOR PHOTOGRAPHER HIGHLIGHT

Nikita Nagda was a junior winner in Season One of Nature's Treasures Photo Competition

The judges were impressed by the composition, the perfect catch light, and the angle of this photo. Even though the image may be of a domestic cat, the photographer could be a future big cat photographer as she displayed some skills in learning about cat behavior.

Nikita's image shows how, while living in an urban area, you don't have to have a big camera and go on safari to capture wild animals in their natural habitat. You can capture images in your own backyard and practice your photography skills even at home.

Q & A with Nikita Nagda

Q. How old are you?

A. 14 years

Q. What camera do you use?

A. I use the Nikon D5200

Q. What top tips would you give a young photographer?

A. If you want to take a good photo, you should be able to reach to the level of the object you are photographing and also try and keep a steady hand.

Q. What do you love about Nature Photography

A. I love that I can capture anything in nature because it is full of surprises.

GUINEAFOWLS

- Guineafowls are medium-sized African birds with small bare head and neck, and attractive blue-grey feathers dotted with white spots.
- They live in the wild and some are also raised on farms.
- In bird classification, Guineafowl, turkey, chicken, grouse and quail belong to the **Order, Galliformes**.
- The Guineafowl family **Numidae,** is endemic to Africa.

VOCABULARY:

- **Confusion** - A group of guineafowls
- **Terrestrial** - Lives on land
- **Keet** – A guineafowl offspring less than 12 weeks old.

Understanding Guineafowls

- Guineafowls are about the size of chickens. However, guineafowls have more bulky body, stout bill, rounded wings, thick legs, large toes, and short tail feathers.

Guineafowl's Food

- Guineafowls are omnivorous as their diet is dictated by the food types available in their habitat.
- They scratch the ground in search of seeds, leaves, insects, bulbs, worms, roots, and scorpions.
- Guineafowls play an important role in controlling ticks, flies, and scorpions in the wild.

Guineafowl Behavior

- Guineafowls are ground dwelling birds that walk, run at great speeds when alarmed or fly short distances.
- They are not territorial and live in flocks of several birds ranging between 15-60 that feed, and roost together.

- Guineafowls are most active early in the morning and late afternoons to feed. They rest during the hottest part of the day and roost in trees at night.
- Guineafowls can be very noisy when alarmed as males make "kek-kek-kek" or "chi-chi-chi" calls and females make "buck-wheat buck wheat" cries.
- The loud cries make them excellent 'guard birds' for chickens from hawks, or other predators.

Species of Guineafowls found in Kenya

1. Helmeted Guineafowls (*Numida meleagris*)

- They have blue-grey feathers dotted with white spots. Their heads are bluish red and bald topped with a "helmet" horn like crest. They have red and blue wattles hanging from the face, and a hunched posture.
- They make loud repetitive calls of *kruh-kruh, kruh-kraaaa krr krr*, and a quieter *pi-pi'oo*.

Helmeted guineafowl. Photo by Muskaan Shaikh

- They are monogamous but pair-bonds are not maintained outside breeding season.
- Females nest in hollows on the ground laying 6-20 eggs that hatch in 24-27 days.
- They have sedentary movement roosting close to areas with available drinking water.

2. Crested Guineafowl (*Guttera pucherani*)

- They have blackish feathers with dense white spots, a distinctive black crest on top of their heads with small curly feathers.
- Females are similar to males but are smaller in size.
- They feed on plants, insects and also follow monkey troops to feed on fruits they drop.

Crested guineafowl at Kibwezi forest.

Photo credits; Gitau Kabue (GK) Photography

- They lay 4-10 eggs on ground nest and hatch in 23 days.
- The hatched chicks fly at 12 days.
- They are ground dwelling and cover long distances daily.

3. Vulturine Guineafowls (*Acryllium vulturinum*)

- They are the largest and most colorful guineafowls.
- One quick look at its vulture-like blue, bald head and you understand how it got "vulture" in its name.
- They are long-necked with a hackle of long lance-shaped feathers, striped black, white and blue.

- They live in drier and more open areas than other guineafowls feeding mostly on seeds, roots, green buds, shoots, and insects like scorpions and spiders.
- They breed in or just after the rainy seasons and lay up to 13-15 eggs that hatch after 23-25 days.

Guineafowl Relationship with Man

- The Helmeted Guineafowl was the first to be domesticated in ancient times to about 2400 BC.
- Their continued domestication for the meat and eggs led to its presence all over the world.

- Guineafowls act as pest controllers by feeding on ants, termites, ticks, and wasps.
- They also act as excellent "Guard birds" for farmers by making loud noises that warn chickens when hawks, owls, and other predators intrude.
- Guineafowls are considered wild birds and to keep them in Kenya, you must have a permit from the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS).

Threats facing Guineafowls

- Habitat loss and degradation caused by agricultural expansion, use of pesticides and deforestation.
- Hunting of wild guineafowls and collection of their eggs by human beings.
- Raptor birds such as hawks and eagles.
- In the wild, monkeys steal the eggs and keets.

A martial eagle predates on a helmeted guineafowl.
Photo Credits; Chege wa Kariuki

MEET BRENDAH NYAGUTHII

Q: Could you please tell us a little about yourself?

A: I was born in Kirinyaga county and went to Geoff Academy in Kirinyaga for my primary education, then Gitugi Girls High School in Murang'a, and later went to University of Eldoret in Uasin Gishu.

Q. How did you get interested in Guineafowls? And why?

A: I was the head of the birdwatching initiative for 2 years at the University of Eldoret. I got an opportunity to work with this amazing bird in 2018 and I do not regret my decision since it is really interesting learning their behaviour day in day out.

How many species of Guineafowls are there and of these, how many are found in Kenya?

A: We have 6 species of guineafowls in the world:

1. Vulturine guineafowl
2. Crested guineafowl
3. White-breasted guineafowl
4. Black guineafowl
5. Helmeted guineafowl
6. Plumed guineafowl

Kenya has 3 species:-

i. Helmeted guineafowl (*Numida Meleagris*);

ii. Vulturine guineafowl (*Acryllium vulturinum*)

iii. Crested guineafowl (*Guttera pucherani*)

Q. What does your work involve?

A: As a researcher, I get to study the birds closely. I put bands on their legs to easily identify each individual. I also record their interactions to know their hierarchy. I observe how they forage, what they eat, and their general behavior.

We also track their movements by fitting some individuals with a tracking device

Q: What is unique about Guineafowls?

A: You can tell the difference between young birds, sub-adults and adult birds by the colour of their eyes. The younger birds have darker eyes, the adults have deep red eyes, and the sub-adults have in-between dark brown and red.

Vulturine Guineafowl keets and adult © Paula Kahumbu / WildlifeDirect

We have also discovered that Vulturine Guineafowls live in a multilevel society. They live in large groups that associate with other groups during the day and night.

Q: How would a young person get involved in Guinea Fowl conservation? What do they need to study?

A: Any conservation-related course or zoology course can be a good start. I studied a Bachelor of Science course in Wildlife Management and focused on Ornithology.

Q: What advise would you give to kids?

A: They should follow their passion and they will get what they desire to venture in.

VULTURINE GUINEAFOWL

During the day, Vulturine Guineafowls move in a flock of up to 50 individuals but at night, some groups roost together in a communal roost while other groups roost separately.

Find out more on this episode of Wildlife Warriors here;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waYA6wiUSRU

WILD JOKES! 🤣

I bought this book but had to return it because of the fowl language:
Cluck, cluck, cluck

A bird flew into a window today; no fowl play suspected as of now

Q: What's the first sign that you have caught bird flu?
A: Fowl symptoms.

Q: Why did the chicken cross the basketball court?
A: The ref was calling fowls.

I was making chicken noises in class
Got a detention for using fowl language

Wild Jokes courtesy of Joy Omulupi

Do you have a wild joke to share.
Please share with us your joke via our
WhatsApp number 0746 511787.

WILD QUIZZES

1. What is the name of a guineafowl chick? _____

2. What is the term used to refer to guineafowls sleeping and resting? _____

3. At what time of the day are guineafowls most active? _____

4. How can one differentiate between a male and female guineafowl?

- Color
- Shape of head
- Size
- Color of eyes

5. What do you call a group of guineafowls? _____

6. Which bird do the vulturine guineafowl get their name from? _____

Please send us your answers via
WhatsApp to
0746 511 787.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP NATURE

COMPOSTING- Converting wastes into manure

Organic manures are beneficial in the cultivation of crops. They increase the organic matter in the soil which in turn releases the plant food in available from the use of crops. Did you know that convert your household waste into manure?

Image courtesy of Patricia Kombo

- Separate your household waste into biodegradable and non-biodegradable.
- **Some of the equipment you need includes:**
  - Gloves
  - Household waste
  - Dry leaves
  - Two containers
  - Cow dung
  - A turning rod
  - water

Share with us what your doing by taking a picture/video or text and share via **WhatsApp** to; **0746 511 787**

COMPOSTING:- Converting waste into manure

To do this you use the following steps:

- Add the biodegradable into a container then add dry leaves of the same volume and cow dung which will help start the decomposition.
- Turn the pile daily and always check the dampness. If too wet, add dry leaves and if dry, add water.

Compost bin. Images courtesy of Georgina Hoare

- Move the compost into a new container after 30-45 days.
- After two months, the waste would have turned to rich compost that can be used as manure.

Tip: Don't add onion or garlic into the compost because it will keep away earthworms which are really important for the compost.

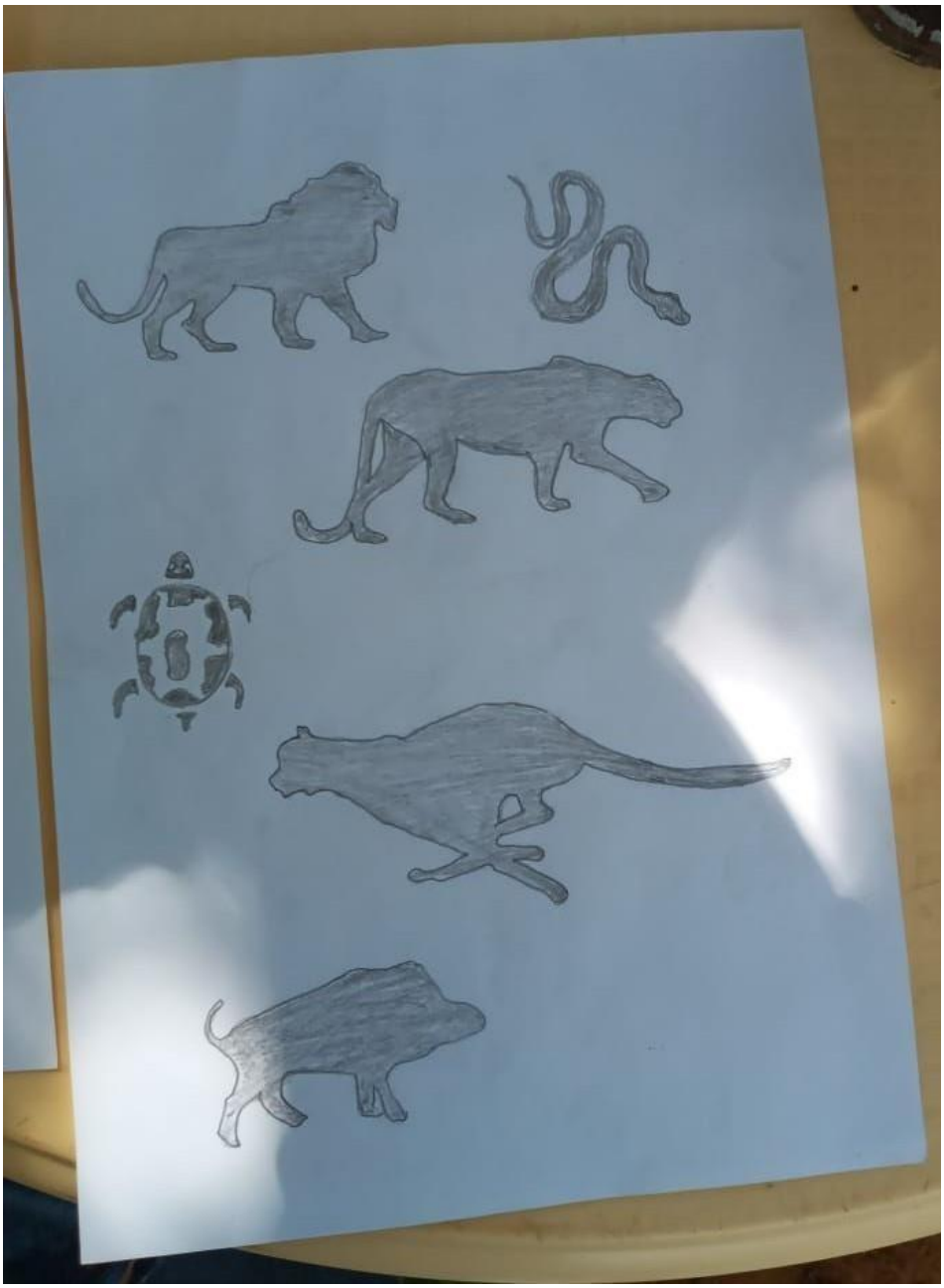
THE ICONIC FIG TREE

On 31st October people in Nairobi joined a march dubbed **"Saws Off Our Tree"** to protest the cutting down of a giant 100 year old fig tree in Westlands along Waiyaki Way to pave way for the expanding highway.

We are happy that on 11th November 2020, Kenya's President, Uhuru Kenyatta issued a decree to save the iconic tree describing it as a "beacon of Kenya's cultural heritage".

This proves that we can protect our green spaces by joining hands and raising our voices.

ART FOR WILDLIFE

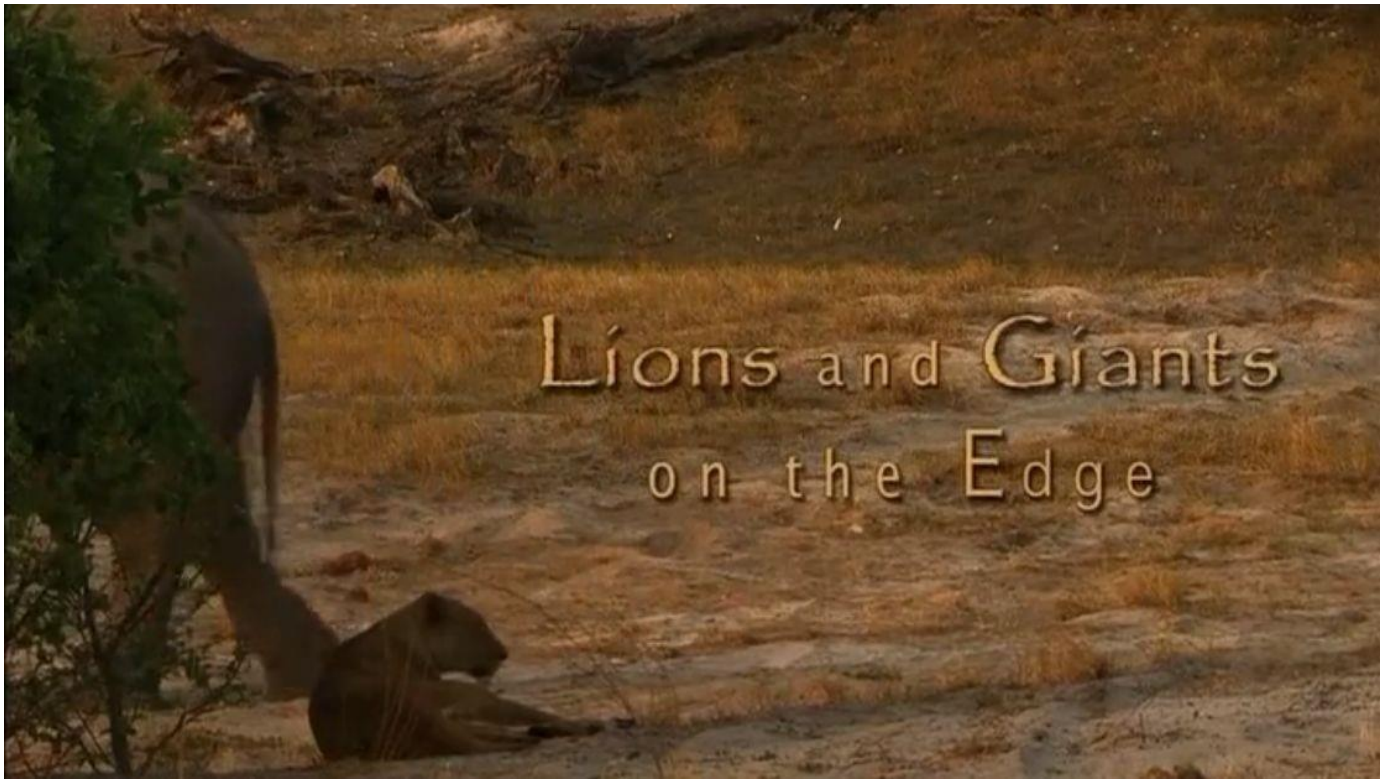


Drawing by Shaliki Lesurkukwa, 16 years old from Lempuranai Primary School.

How many animals can you name from the drawing?

Please send a **photo** of your **Drawing**, **Painting**, **Poem** or **Essay** on **WhatsApp** to **0746 511 787**.

THIS WEEK ON MY WILD AFRICA



This Sunday, we follow the great pride of Savuti led by Induna the lion as they hunt the elephants in their pride of 40 lions . This pride is considered the most formidable group of lions in Africa because of their prowess in hunting.

Discover more about Lions and Elephants of Savuti this Sunday at 5:30 PM EAT only on Citizen TV Kenya.

Watch the **film** with your family and tell us **what you learnt** by sending an **SMS** or **WhatsApp message** to **0746 511787**

COMING UP… DON'T MISS

- My Wild Africa on CITIZEN TV every Sunday at 5:30 pm EAT.
- World Fisheries Day - 21st November
- International Cheetah Day – 4th December

FOR PARENTS

This newsletter is issued each week to inform, inspire and encourage children who are at home during COVID 19 school closure.

It is distributed completely free of charge to children and their parents anywhere in Kenya, Africa and the world. If you would love to contribute to the Wildlife Warriors Kids, please make a donation to:

PAYBILL NO. 600100

A/C NO: 0100003937598

Email us: info@wildlifedirect.org

Contact us on: +254 746 511 787

To sign up to this newsletter series, click here:

bit.ly/WWKidsSignup

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